

Kayaking Wilderness Rangers

The Wilderness Ranger Program in Misty Fiords began in the spring of 1989. Kayakers were chosen as the mode of transportation to gain access to remote areas, closely examine and explore coastlines, and promote the Wilderness standard of non-motorized use in Wilderness areas. Rangers traveled the bays and canals inventorying campsites, keeping statistics on public use, documenting archaeological sites, and making visitor contacts. Information collected will help the Forest Service better serve recreationists in the Misty Fiords area.

The Wilderness Ranger Program is successful and growing with a bright and exciting future ahead. We will continue promoting the No-Trace camping and hiking ethic to visitors and expand the interpretive aspect of the program. Wilderness Rangers help ensure the integrity of the Wilderness for all to enjoy now and in the future. See you in the wild!

Tongass National Forest Alaska



Welcome

Wilderness belongs to us all. By touching these wild places gently, the freedoms and opportunities we enjoy today will remain for future generations.

This information is provided to help you kayak and camp in Misty Fiords National Monument and Revillagigedo Island in southeast Alaska. Both are part of the Tongass National Forest, managed by the Forest Service.

Misty Fiords National Monument encompasses 2,294,343 acres with 151,832 acres designated as Wilderness. Some of the areas along this kayak route are located outside the Monument boundary, and are managed by the Ketchikan Ranger District for multiple-use purposes.

The Misty Fiords area abounds with scenic waterways. Traveling by kayak offers great opportunities for finding secluded campsites and solitude. We hope this brochure will help you have a safer and more enjoyable trip to one of the world's finest places for viewing scenery from the seat of a kayak.

Climate

The climate of southeast Alaska is maritime. The temperature is moderated by adjacent seas and abundant moisture from the air mass lying over the coastal mountains. The overall effect is cool summers and moderate winters, considerable year-round precipitation, and heavy snowfall at higher elevations. Thick dense fog is frequent and often leads to very low visibility. No part of the continental United States receives as much precipitation as southeast Alaska. Average summer temperatures vary from 46 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Yearly precipitation averages about 150 inches.

Coastline

A variety of beach landings and shoreline types exist. The range extends from tidal flats and low, easily accessible landings to sheer cliffs extending below the water's surface. Some places, such as the southern outer coast of Misty Fiords offer line white sandy beaches. Steep cliffs along stretches of Walker and Rudyerd Bays and the northwest side of east Behm Canal prevent any kind of landing. In many areas waves as well as rebound waves can be hazardous.

Topographical and nautical charts, along with good planning will help you enjoy a satisfying and safe trip.

Tides and Wind

Winds and tidal currents are potential hazards for kayakers. Water is rough and often extremely rough, with no good landing and camping sites for long stretches. Tides and currents near shore are complex due to the many islands, bays, and passages. Tidal changes occur four times a day and average between 10 and 12 feet with extremes of 15 and 23 feet. Carry a tide book, know what the tides are doing, and how to make the corrections for your location. Nautical charts help identify hazardous areas. When navigating through tide rips and salt chucks (rapids) plan to travel during slack tides (the period during tidal change when the water slows and reverses flow).

In areas where there is a confluence of major waterways, tidal changes can be exciting but hazardous. Under certain conditions, such as tide changes and adverse weather, you could experience a change from relatively calm water to standing eight-foot waves in a very short period of time. This is especially true during extreme high and extreme low tidal cycles of each month. Check all conditions before making any major crossings of open water.

Winds are unpredictable and can be strong. They can increase rapidly causing water conditions to change. The prevailing wind is often from a southerly direction. This normally brings precipitation and blustery days. A high pressure usually brings sunny days and a northerly wind, yet it's not uncommon to see 20- to 35-knot winds and very rough water.

The Setting

The topography ranges from low, white, sandy beaches along the southern coast of the monument to the steep, snow-covered mountains found farther north. Misty Fiords lies within the broad zone of active volcanism and other mountain-building processes which rim the North Pacific basin. Much of the region is characterized by deep valleys, steep slopes, and narrow intervalley ridges. During the last ice age, extensive glaciation created U-shaped valleys, serrate ridges, horn peaks, and cirque basins. Active glaciers continue their work in upland plateaus and valleys in the northeast corner of the Monument. Old-growth stands of Sitka spruce and western hemlock dominate the mountainsides with scatterings of red cedar and Alaska cedar. Thickets of alder, blueberry, and devil's club form dense undergrowth along the forest floor. Open meadows and alpine meadows lay nestled in the mountain valleys.

Water is an integral element of Misty Fiords with streams rushing down through green valleys, waterfalls cascading over sheer rock walls, and ghostly mist drifting along the firds.

Cover photo by: Dale Pihlman

Wilderness

Kayaking

Misty Fiords National Monument and Revillagigedo Island

Cabins and Shelters

Throughout southeast Alaska, the Forest Service maintains cabins and shelters on both fresh and salt water. After a couple of days in pouring rain you may appreciate a place to dry out. Plan ahead as cabin reservations must be made in advance and a fee is charged per night. Adirondack-style, three-sided shelters are on a first-come, first-serve basis, with no fee. Use the same precautions with a shelter as you would a tent camp. Remember to keep the shelter and cabin areas, including fire pits, clean of food and litter. Information about cabins, shelters, and boat availability can be found on the Recreation Data Table in this brochure.

Fishing

Misty Fiords is known for the number and size of fish found in lakes and streams. It provides habitat for all five Pacific species of salmon as well as Dolly Varden char, and rainbow, steelhead, and cutthroat trout. Nearly half of all king salmon spawning and rearing streams in southeast Alaska are found in Misty Fiords.

A sport fishing license is required for anyone 16 years of age or older. For further information about Alaska's fishing regulations and licenses contact Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Ketchikan. Familiarize yourself with the local regulations if you plan to fish on your trip.

Trip Plan

Everyone travels at a different pace and has their own personal goals. Take these into consideration when estimating your time. Always allow for changes in weather conditions which may slow you down or cause you to re-route your trip.

Less experienced kayakers may want to stay within the protection of sheltered bays, such as Rudyerd and Walker, while experienced paddlers may choose to venture into Behm Canal, circumnavigate Revillagigedo Island, or explore the beaches along the southern coast of the Monument. Following the most direct route along the coast, it is about 185 miles around Revillagigedo Island. You will want to adjust this figure for any coves or bays you plan to visit. When paddling around the island take into consideration that the area between Settler's Cove and Nahla is private land.

A wilderness trip can be enhanced through sharing, but too many companions can have an adverse effect on the environment. To minimize impact, please limit your group size to 12 members or less.

Leave a trip plan with someone who will contact authorities if you are not back within a few days of your expected return. Stick to your plan as closely as possible but always put safety first. We recommend taking signaling devices, such as flares, to alert passing boats or aircraft in an emergency.

When to Go

The kayaking season extends from mid-May through mid-September. Whether embroiled in clouds, drenched in a rain shower, or shimmering in bright sunlight, beauty can be found every day of every month. Weather is difficult to predict and your saltwater experience depends more on skill than the time of year.

Wildlife

Observing wildlife is their natural habitat can be one of the most rewarding, and at times, breathtaking, experiences of your trip. Quietly paddling along, you may have the opportunity to watch a brown bear ambling across a grassy meadow, surprise a seal and her pup, and undoubtedly see bald eagles soaring overhead. Other wildlife viewing might include: Sitka black-tailed deer, mountain goat, wolf, beaver, marten, and wolverine. Occasionally sighted in Behm Canal and nearby ocean waters are sea lions, whales, Dall and harbor porpoises.

An abundant variety of birds may be seen in wooded areas and a multitude of waterfowl inhabit the various bays, streams, and lakes. Bring along your binoculars for safe and enjoyable wildlife viewing.

Remember, you are a visitor. Please respect an animal's territory and allow them to live their lives without unnecessary disturbance.

Happy Bears, Happy People

Both brown and black bears are plentiful in Misty Fiords. Although mostly black bears inhabit Revillagigedo Island, brown bears have been sighted. ALL bears should be treated with caution and respect throughout the season. They don't necessarily prefer any single month to be out and about. Remember you are visiting their territory. Be extra cautious around any female with cubs, as they are extremely protective and dangerous. Some words of wisdom while traveling in bear country:

- Prevention is the key to getting along with bears!
- The most important thing you can do is alert bears of your presence. Make noise when paddling up to beaches and streams, walking on shores, and hiking. Whistling is not recommended as you may mistakenly mimic another animal and draw a bear to you!
- Do not camp on any recognizable bear trail.
- Keep an immaculate camp area, as far as food and garbage are concerned.

Historically Speaking

It is believed people first inhabited southeast Alaska about 10,000 years ago. Though exact dates and origins are unknown, evidence of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian village sites have been found in Misty Fiords. These sites have all but disappeared due to the rapid decomposition of organic materials in this wet climate. Fish traps, once used by Native people for harvesting salmon, can still be found in some intertidal zones close to large streams. These large, shallow depressions were surrounded by a rock border which trapped and held fish when the tide receded. Because of their exceptional construction, many continue to trap fish today.

The most visible remains of habitation are petroglyphs (images painted on rock surfaces), and petrographs (images etched into rock surfaces). The exact meaning of this symbolic primitive art remains unknown.

The abundance of sockeye, coho, and king salmon attracted the early European settlers who began operating salteries for curing salmon in the 1860s to 1870s. This method of preserving salmon in salt or a salt brine mixture continued until the early 1900s. The cannery industry began in the late 1800s. All cannery work was done by hand including making the cans. In the early 1900s machines eliminated much of the handwork. The last of the canneries in Misty closed in the 1950s.

Several fox farms were established in Misty during the early 1900s. They were typical of such farms in southeast Alaska where mink, as well as foxes, were raised for fur. These ventures located in remote places took advantage of the natural availability of fish for feed. Economic problems in the 30s led to a drastic decline in the market for furs resulting in abandoned farms.

Trappers benefited from the abundance of mink, marten, beaver, and wolf in Misty. A few remnants of trappers' cabins can be found; most were small and crude but provided warmth and protection for these hardy souls.

Handlogging was most intensive during the 1920s to 1940s. They were small-scale operations harvesting stands of trees along the shoreline thereby using gravity to slide the trees downhill to water. Log rafts were kept in protective coves until large enough to tow to Ketchikan to sell.

Since Wilderness designation, no logging activity occurs on the Monument. Today the springboard notches remain as reminders of the handlogging days.

Cultural remains are slowly deteriorating and returning the forest to its natural wild state: old saltery and cannery sites are covered by (overgrowth); moss-covered trappers' cabins are crumbling away; stumps with springboard notches are rotting into the ground.

We paddle just offshore in the long evening...The inlet lies incredibly still. In a grassy clearing ahead by the water's edge we spot our fourth bear of the evening—a big brownie sow. Drifting closer, we see three cubs tumbling at play in the grass.
Paddling softly, hardly breathing and steering to keep a safe margin of water between us and the bears, we drift closer...The cub continues to tussle and tumble. Then there is a snort from Mother—and the clearing is empty. --The Coastal Kayaker



Cultural remains such as those of the Hidden Inlet Cannery are slowly returning to their natural forest state.

Notches, still visible today, were once cut into the side of a tree and a board called a springboard was inserted for the handlogger to stand on. This made it possible to get above the butt swell and also helped to cut trees on steep slopes.

Above the bluff was a stand of tall spruce on a steep slope. As I fell them they would run down the slope and disappear over the brink of the cliff. I'd find them floating below, but I could not see a mark where they had come down. One day Ruth came to watch. She reported that the trees shed out a hundred feet, like a giant spear thrown by some demon at the top of the cliff, then turned downward, struck the water end-on, and went completely out of sight. It stayed down so long she was sure it had stuck on the bottom, then with a splash of water shot back up, but first, sixty feet into the air, fell over, and floated free. --Handloggers

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Photo by: Mares Hartung

Be Prepared

Once out of the Ketchikan vicinity you are on your own. There are private and commercial boats traveling the waterways and planes flying overhead, but a kayak has low visibility. Getting help quickly will be unlikely.

To be prepared for most situations some necessary items include:

- Wool, polypropylene, or capilene clothing (that and socks included)
- Good rain gear and a rain hat
- Over-the-call rubber boots with felt liners
- Tent with a bug screen and rainfly
- Camping stove and fuel
- Extra food for longer stays due to bad weather or an inviting cove
- Life vest and extra paddle
- Tide book for Ketchikan area and nautical charts
- Compass
- Fire starter and waterproof matches
- Signaling devices (flares)
- First aid kit
- Kayak repair kit
- Rope for hanging food
- Heavy gauge trash bags
- Bug repellent

If you are prepared for this cool, rainy climate and understand a little about your brown bear neighbors, you should have a safe and enjoyable adventure.

Selecting a Campsite

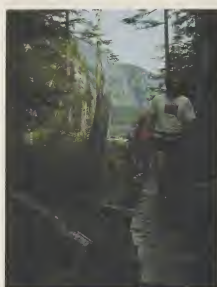
In searching for a campsite, your objective is to find a spot that will not be damaged by your stay. Ground that is covered with moss, deer-cabbage, or blueberry drains well and can make a fine campsite. Avoid skunk cabbage patches, even if the ground appears dry. Within two hours of a rain squall, you'll probably be sleeping in a pond.

Beach camping opportunities can provide beautiful open vistas and an occasional glorious sunset. When choosing your site consider the unexpected portage potential. Check nautical charts for large tidal flats and avoid these areas, come and go at high tide, or submit to a massive portage. Lessen the hazards of slippery footing by hauling your gear separately from your boats and using a team approach when hauling boats.

Hiking and Trails

There are over twenty hiking trails maintained by the Forest Service in Misty Fiords and Ketchikan Ranger District. They are marked with orange and white, diamond-shaped signs near the trailhead. Skiffs and ares are provided at most freshwater lakes accessible by trail. Information on trails and boats are found on the Recreation Data Table in this brochure.

An area of interest is Shelokum hot springs, located at the northern end of Behm Canal. Shelokum trail, accessible in Bailey Bay, leads to a rustic shelter and the hot springs. Enjoy a relaxing and rejuvenating dip while on your trip around the island!



Along misty shorelines the black bear is the most frequently seen bear.

Leave scented socks, deodorants, toothpaste, and other toiletries at home. Smell human, not delicious!

- Keep food stored away from your camp (50 yards or so), and hang it up in a tree, out of a bear's reach. Storing food in a kayak is highly discouraged!
- NEVER take food into your tent and try to keep food odors off of your clothes.
- Women should take special care when menstruating. Pack out sanitary napkins and tampons in several layers of zip-lock plastic bags.
- Firearms may be carried for personal protection. There are also commercial pepper propellant sprays available.

The bears found in these areas have yet to become spoiled by contact with people. They still retain their natural fear, and will, more often than not, avoid an encounter if they realize what you are and that you are not a threat. Please help keep the bears "wild".

Misty Fiords

Trail	Distance (in miles)	Topographic Map	Trail	Distance (in miles)	Topographic Map
Bakewell	1.3	B-2	Bayley Bay	2.2	D-5
Chester	1	B-3	Bel Island	1	B-5
Ellis Lake	4.3	C-3, C-4	Geachin Lake	1	B-4
			Long Lake	1.3	D-5
Grace Lake	1.9	C-4	McDonald Lake	1.3	D-5
High Smith Lake	0.25	A-3	Naha River	6	C-6
Humpback	3	A-2, A-3	Orchard Lake	1.5	D-5
Manzanita Lake	3.3	C-3, C-4	Orchard Lake	1.5	D-5
Nocoya Lake	0.8	C-3	Well Lake	2.6	C-4
Punchbowl Lake	1	C-3			Brad Canal
Winstanley Lake	2.3	B-3	Reflection Lake	2.3	A-5

[illegible]

SYMBOL		ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT	
K	Kachikan Ranger District	225-245	
M	Misty Flats National Monument	225-245	
OTHER SYMBOLS			
C	Recreation Cabin	B	Boat
S	Automobile Shelter	T	Trail
P	Footpath	R	Road
W	Wood Sheds	W	Water
O	Oil Sheds	D	Deer
F	Fireplace	G	Goat
Bb	Black & Brown Bear	Gr	Graying
B	Black Bear	S	Snail
S	Sheep	S	Salmon
S	Sheephead	S	Salmon

Although many hazardous areas are shown on the map, all waters in Southeast have the potential to be hazardous. Tidal changes or adverse weather conditions can quickly change calm waters to hazardous waters. Always use caution and keep safety in mind!